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GOP leaders blame doctors and misinformation for the confusion

In this Jan. 8, 2019 photo, South Dakota state legislators listen while Gov. Kristi Noem delivers the State of the State address at the state Capitol in Pierre, S.D.

Associated Press
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By **KIMBERLEE KRUESI**
 Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — In Republican-led states across the U.S., conservative legislators are refusing to reevaluate abortion bans — even as doctors and patients insist the laws' exceptions are dangerously unclear, resulting in denied treatment to some

pregnant women in need. Instead, GOP leaders accuse abortion rights advocates of deliberately spreading misinformation and doctors of intentionally denying services in an effort to undercut the bans and make a political point. At the same time, however, some states are taking steps that they say will

provide more clarity about when abortions can be legally performed. The Republican-controlled South Dakota Legislature wants to create a video in which medical experts — and the state's attorneys — would explain to doctors and patients when abortions can be legally performed. The measure was

passed last month and is now awaiting the signature of Republican Gov. Kristi Noem, who has indicated she will sign it. The first-in-the-nation idea is wholeheartedly supported by SBA Pro-Life, one of the country's largest anti-abortion groups, which says the video will help to combat "confusion caused by the

abortion industry." "South Dakota is showing the rest of the nation how to protect women's lives from the misinformation surrounding abortion laws," said the organization's public affairs director in South Dakota, Kelsey Pritchard.

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GOP leaders blame doctors and misinformation for the confusion

Continued from Front

Oklahoma and Kentucky are also taking steps to clarify their abortion bans, though in both states the attorneys general, not physicians, are the ones dictating the terms.

In Oklahoma, the AG sent out a memo in 2022 informing prosecutors and police that doctors should have “substantial leeway” to provide certain abortions. Last year, the office added that patients don’t have to be “septic, bleeding profusely, or otherwise close to death” — but reiterated a past warning that doctors should be prosecuted if there’s evidence they violated the law by providing an abortion when a woman’s life wasn’t actually in danger.

Kentucky’s attorney general has stated that miscarriages and ectopic pregnancies — when a fertilized egg grows outside the uterus — are both exempted from the state’s abortion ban, but has been silent on the majority of other pregnancy complications that physicians and patients have pointed out.

Since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the constitutional right to abortion in 2022, states have been free to enact their own restrictions. South Dakota is among the 14 that ban abortion at all stages of pregnancy. The law does allow an abortion exception to save the life of the mother, but like similar statutes in other states, it does not clearly define which pregnancy complications are considered life-threatening.

State Republican Rep. Taylor Rehfeldt, a nurse anesthetist, said she decided to propose the informational video after hearing from physicians about the ongoing confusion. She said the video offered the best solution because any attempt to tweak the abortion ban itself would provoke strong disagreement among her GOP colleagues.

It remains to be seen how much help the video will be to patients and doc-



South Dakota Republican Rep. Taylor Rehfeldt pauses before entering the House of Representatives in the state Capitol in Pierre, S.D., on Feb. 21, 2024.

Associated Press

tors, however. It’s not expected to specifically list pregnancy complications that would legally qualify women for abortions, and it’s unclear if it will contain a legal disclaimer warning that anyone who watches the video may still face potential criminal charges.

“It’s not going to deal with hard calls,” said Greer Donley, an associate professor at the University of Pittsburgh School of Law who is an expert on abortion law. “They actually don’t want to deal with the hard calls because their movement is not sure ... how those hard calls should be resolved.”

South Dakota Republican state Sen. Erin Tobin, one of the measure’s proponents, acknowledged to a Senate panel last month that the video will not contain specific examples.

“That’s the problem with health care, is that there are so many different circumstances, that you have to allow doctors discretion,” Tobin said.

As some states mull how to

clarify — without weakening — their abortion bans, abortion rights advocates in several states continue to challenge the bans with lawsuits.

Twenty Texas women denied abortions are suing the state seeking clarification, while advocates filed a lawsuit in Tennessee arguing that the state ban’s vaguely defined exceptions put pregnant women’s lives at risk.

Tennessee Attorney General Jonathan Skrmetti pushed back. He argued that it wasn’t the law, per se, that is harming women but rather “other factors like doctors’ independent choices not to provide permissible abortions.”

The lawsuit is ongoing, with attorneys expected to make their arguments before a three-judge panel next month on whether the state ban should be temporarily blocked as the legal battle continues or if the case should be dismissed entirely.

Donley spurned the idea that doctors bear the re-

sponsibility for endangering patients.

“I completely reject any narrative that there’s any sort of provider out there that’s intentionally harming women and pregnant people for the sake of a news story,” she said. “That’s just not happening. But are mistakes being made because people are terrified? Yeah, probably.”

In Texas, a pregnant woman whose fetus had a fatal condition went straight to the state supreme court last year to request an exemption from the Lone Star State’s strict ban. The court denied Katie Cox’s request — forcing her to go out of state to get an abortion — but did urge the Texas Medical Board to issue guidance to doctors on how to interpret the law. “While the judiciary cannot compel executive branch entities to do their part, it is obvious that the legal process works more smoothly when they do,” the justices wrote.

And yet, the medical board, comprising 19 mem-

bers appointed by the governor, has so far not offered any sort of guidance.

Republican Gov. Greg Abbott is a vocal abortion opponent. Frustrated with the board’s inaction, Amy and Steven Bresnen, a couple who are lawyers and lobbyists, filed a petition in January asking it to clarify what circumstances qualify as medical exceptions to the state’s abortion ban.

“Pregnant females in life-threatening situations and the health care providers otherwise willing to save their lives simply cannot be required to stand idly in the void when the TMB (Texas Medical Board) has the authority to act and the duty to regulate medicine in this state in the public interest,” the petition states.

The board is expected to meet later this month and will likely address the petition, Steven Bresnen said.

“Nobody has put them on the spit to make them make a formal decision,” he said. “If they decline to, they have to explain why.” □

Housing Secretary Fudge resigning. Biden hails her dedication to boosting supply of affordable homes

By ASHRAF KHALIL

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Housing and Urban Development Secretary Marcia Fudge announced Monday that she would resign her post, effective March 22, saying she was leaving “with mixed emotions.”

A former mayor of Warrensville Heights, Ohio, and later an Ohio representative in Congress, Fudge, 71, served as HUD secretary since the start of President Joe Biden's administration.

“As a dedicated public servant for nearly five decades, I have been devoted to improving the quality of life for the people of this nation, focusing on those with the greatest need,” Fudge said in a statement. “Having worked at every level of government ... I have worked tirelessly to ensure that America lives up to its promise of liberty and justice for all.”

Fudge's statement did not indicate a reason she was resigning now, saying only that she planned to “transition to life as a private citizen.”

The White House, in a state-



U.S. Secretary of Department of Housing and Urban Development Marcia Fudge testifies before the House Committee on Financial Services hearing on Capitol Hill, Jan. 11, 2024, in Washington. Associated Press

ment, hailed Fudge's dedication to increasing the supply of affordable housing and protect the housing needs of some of the country's most vulnerable residents.

“From her time as a mayor, to her years as a fierce advocate in the U.S. House of Representatives, Marcia's vision, passion, and focus

on increasing economic opportunity have been assets to our country,” said Biden, a Democrat. “I'm grateful for all of her contributions toward a housing system that works for all Americans, and I wish her well in her next chapter.” Since taking over at HUD, Fudge has focused much of her efforts on addressing

homelessness and making housing more affordable problems that worsened during and after the coronavirus pandemic. Last year, HUD announced a series of measures aimed at reducing barriers to affordable housing, such as zoning restrictions that in some places have become a hurdle to increas-

ing the supply of affordable housing.

Fudge has touted the fact that her agency extended rental assistance to 100,000 additional families. HUD also has built and repaired more than a half million units of affordable housing, issued more new rental assistance vouchers in the last three years than have been issued in same period over the past two decades and housed more than 1.2 million people experiencing homelessness.

White House principal deputy press secretary Olivia Dalton said Biden “certainly will nominate a replacement” for Fudge, but she offered no timeline for the process. For now, Deputy Secretary Adrienne Todman will serve as acting HUD secretary when Fudge departs, the White House said.

Under Fudge, HUD “worked closely with partners at the federal, state and local levels to increase the housing supply, particularly the supply of affordable homes, while allocating historic resources to address homelessness,” Dalton said. □

Save Our Signal! Politicians close in on votes needed to keep AM radio in every car

By PATRICK WHITTLE

Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — The signal might be fading, but it can't be lost.

That's the message from politicians who are closing in on the required number of votes needed to pass federal legislation that requires AM radios in every new car.

The prevalence of AM broadcast radio has dipped in recent decades as more listeners turn to options such as satellite radio and podcasts during drivetime. But a large, bipartisan group of lawmakers believes saving the AM dial is critical to public safety, especially in rural America, and they want to ensure access to it via car radios.

“The emergency alert sys-

tem works on the AM spectrum - that's where people get information about emergencies,” said independent Sen. Angus King of Maine. “It's a critical source of information, particularly in rural areas that might not have clear access to an FM signal.”

King, and Republican Maine Sen. Susan Collins, are among dozens of lawmakers supporting the AM for Every Vehicle Act. Lawmakers first proposed the legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate last year, and it has gained a wave of new co-sponsors in recent weeks. There are now enough co-sponsors to pass the bill in the House, and the Senate is only a few sponsors away, federal records state.

The proposal would have the U.S. Department of Transportation require all new motor vehicles to have devices that can access AM broadcast stations. The rules would apply to vehicles manufactured in the U.S., imported into the country, or shipped in interstate commerce.

The drive to save AM radio comes as some carmakers are phasing the format out. Democratic Sen. Ed Markey of Massachusetts, a proponent of saving AM radio, said last year that he sent a letter to 20 carmakers asking them to maintain AM broadcast and found eight had removed it from electric vehicles.

That is potentially bad news for farming communities and rural parts of the

country, lawmakers said. The National Association of Farm Broadcasters found last year that two-thirds of farmers listen to AM radio for news that is important to their operations.

For some farming communities, AM radio “isn't just another option it's the only option,” said Jenni Tilton-Flood, a dairy farmer and owner of Flood Brothers Farm in Clinton, Maine. □



A display screen inside a vehicle shows various radio options, including AM radio, Monday, March 11, 2024, in Bow, N.H.

Associated Press

Report: New Jersey and U.S. were not prepared for COVID-19 and state remains so for the next crisis

By **WAYNE PARRY**

Associated Press

TRENTON, N.J. (AP) — New Jersey and the nation were not prepared when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, and the state “remains underprepared for the next emergency,” according to an independent report examining New Jersey’s response to the pandemic that sickened nearly 3 million people statewide and killed over 33,000.

The report released Monday faults planning, communication and decision-making before and during the pandemic, which broke out in early 2020.

Democratic Gov. Phil Murphy called the pandemic “the greatest crisis our state has ever faced.”

He promised an outside review of his administration’s response to the outbreak in its early days. The \$9 million publicly funded report was done by the law firm of Montgomery McCracken Walker & Rhoads LLP and Boston Consulting Group. It was led by Paul Zoubek, a former assistant state attorney general.

“I know New Jersey will be better off because of this review, and my administration looks forward to work-



A sign on the Seaside Heights, N.J., boardwalk on May 15, 2020, advises people how far away from each other they should stay to maintain social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic.
Associated Press

ing with the Legislature on its recommendations,” Murphy said. State Republicans have been sharply critical of Murphy’s performance during the pandemic, including mask mandates and shut-downs, but had not publicly reacted to the release of the report as of early Monday afternoon.

The report was blunt in listing failures leading up to the pandemic, as well as during it. “We collectively failed as a nation and as a state to be adequately prepared,” Zoubek wrote. “At the state level, heroic actions were taken to respond in good faith to the crisis. Despite the lessons of the last four years, New Jer-

sey remains underprepared for the next emergency.” The report also noted things New Jersey did well during the pandemic, including making “significant systemic improvements.” “The state, to its credit, took bold and early steps designed to substantially reduce the number of people infected: shut-downs,

quarantines, mask requirements, and social distancing were all implemented and resulted in dramatic improvements in health outcomes over the course of the pandemic. By the Delta and Omicron wave, New Jersey became one of the states with the lowest death rates,” the report read. It also said the state’s campaign to vaccinate residents and convince those hesitant to receive the shots helped New Jersey combat the spread of the virus. “But no level of effort could overcome an inadequate healthcare infrastructure and scarcity of basic medical supplies,” the report read. “Neither the state nor the federal government had clear, executable plans in place to respond to and manage such limited resources in an uncertain and rapidly evolving environment.” In a typical example, the report noted that in 2015 five years before the pandemic the state health department created a “pandemic influenza plan” that the report said “was extremely accurate in predicting what would eventually happen during the COVID-19 pandemic.” □

Most teens report feeling happy or peaceful when they go without smartphones, Pew survey finds

By **BARBARA ORTUTAY**
AP Technology Writer

Nearly three-quarters of U.S. teens say they feel happy or peaceful when they don’t have their phones with them, according to a new report from the Pew Research Center.

In a survey published Monday, Pew also found that despite the positive associations with going phone-free, most teens have not limited their phone or social media use.

The survey comes as policymakers and children’s advocates are growing increasingly concerned with teens’ relationships with

their phones and social media. Last fall, dozens of states, including California

and New York, sued Instagram and Facebook owner Meta Platforms Inc. for



In this March 13, 2019, file photo Facebook, Messenger and Instagram apps are displayed on an iPhone in New York.
Associated Press

harming young people and contributing to the youth mental health crisis by knowingly and deliberately designing features that addict children. In January, the CEOs of Meta, TikTok, X and other social media companies went before the Senate Judiciary Committee to testify about their platforms’ harms to young people.

Despite the increasing concerns, most teens say smartphones make it easier to be creative and pursue hobbies, while 45% said it helps them do well in school. Most teens said the benefits of having a smart-

phone outweigh the harms for people their age. Nearly all U.S. teens (95%) have access to a smartphone, according to Pew. Majorities of teens say smartphones make it a little or a lot easier for people their age to pursue hobbies and interests (69%) and be creative (65%). Close to half (45%) say these devices have made it easier for youth to do well in school. The poll was conducted from Sept. 26-Oct. 23, 2023, among a sample of 1,453 pairs of teens with one parent and has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.2 percentage points. □

The first-ever European climate risk assessment finds a continent unprepared for growing extremes

By **CARLOS MUREITHI** and
DANA BELTAJI

Associated Press

Europe is facing growing climate risks and is unprepared for them, the European Environment Agency said in its first-ever risk assessment for the bloc Monday. The agency said Europe is prone to more frequent and more punishing weather extremes including increasing wildfires, drought, more unusual rainfall patterns and flooding and it needs to immediately address them in order to protect its energy, food security, water and health. These climate risks "are growing faster than our societal preparedness," Leena Ylä-Mononen, the EEA's executive director, said in a statement.

The report identified 36 major climate risks for the continent, such as threats to ecosystems, economies, health and food systems, and found that more than half demand greater action now. It classified eight as needing urgent attention like conserving eco-



A man wraps his shirt over his face as he tries to extinguish a fire, near the seaside resort of Lindos, on the Aegean Sea island of Rhodes, southeastern Greece, on July 24, 2023.

Associated Press

systems, protecting people against heat, protecting people and infrastructure from floods and wildfires, and securing relief funds for disasters.

The report said Europe is the world's fastest-warming continent and has been heating up twice as fast as other regions since the

1980s. The heat has been linked to more intense rains and floods, and the report predicts rainfall decline and more severe droughts in southern Europe.

Without urgent and decisive action, it warns, many of the climate risks it identified could become catastrophic. To reduce climate

risks and improve adaptation to warming, it recommends that the EU and its member states collaborate with regional and local bodies.

The report is "a huge wake-up call" for the continent, said Manon Dufour, Brussels director for climate think tank E3G, and could have

implications for climate policy at both the European and national levels.

At the European level, Dufour said the report could "open the eyes" of European leaders who are currently most focused on security issues, as climate can affect economic and energy security.

On a national level, Dufour said finance ministers in particular should be spurred by the report "to make economic and social resilience the key priority." She pointed to the report's finding that economic losses from heat waves and floods could reach 1 trillion euros (\$1.1 trillion) a year by the end of the century.

"It's clearly in our best interest to adapt to changing risks we can no longer avoid, including preparedness for bigger extremes and surprises, and to avoid the risks from getting further out of hand by reducing greenhouse gases," said Maarten van Aalst, director-general at the Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute. □

A U.S. man is sentenced to life in prison for murder and rape in attack on 2 American women in Germany

BERLIN (AP) — An American man was convicted of murder and other charges on Monday for brutally attacking two American women near Germany's famed Neuschwanstein castle last summer and pushing them into a ravine, fatally injuring one of them. He was sentenced to life in prison.

The Kempten state court also convicted the 31-year-old of attempted murder and rape with fatal consequences, the German news agency dpa reported. Presiding judge Christoph Schwiebacher determined that the defendant bears particularly severe guilt, meaning that he likely won't be eligible for release after 15 years as is usually the case in Germany. Defendants in the German legal system do not formal-

ly enter pleas to charges, but the suspect admitted to the charges when his trial opened on Feb. 19.

Schwiebacher described the defendant as "incredibly callous." He said that "a release after 15 years would not be justifiable."

In line with German privacy laws, German authorities did not identify the perpetrator and the victims. However, family and friends at the time said that the victims were 21-year-old Eva Liu, who died, and her friend Kelsey Chang, 22, who survived. Both were recent graduates of the University of Illinois.

The attack took place on June 14 near the Marienbrücke, a bridge over a gorge that offers a view of the castle, one of Germany's most famous tourist

attractions.

Prosecutors have said the suspect met the two women by chance on a hiking path and lured them off the trail. They said he apparently first forced the younger woman to the ground and tried to undress her.

When the older woman tried to help her, a scuffle ensued and the suspect allegedly pushed her down a steep slope. She fell about 50 meters (165 feet) and sustained a head injury, bruises and grazes, but survived.

The suspect then strangled the younger woman until she was unconscious and raped her, prosecutors have said, before pushing her down the slope as well. She died later in a hospital. "He disposed of her like a bag of garbage," judge



A 31-year-old American man accused of murder, center, is led into the courtroom at the regional court in Kempten, Germany, Monday March 11, 2024.

Associated Press

Schwiebacher said as he announced the verdict on Monday, dpa reported.

The court found that the defendant wanted to keep video footage and a photo he had made of his actions material that became im-

portant evidence to investigators as a "trophy."

Police officers arrested him near the scene of the attack.

The victims were recovered from the ravine by a helicopter. □

Sweden's flag is raised at NATO headquarters to cement its place as the 32nd member of the alliance

By **LORNE COOK**
Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — Sweden's flag was raised at NATO headquarters on Monday, cementing the Nordic country's place as the 32nd member two years after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine persuaded its reluctant public to seek safety under the alliance's security umbrella.

Under a steady rain, Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson, Crown Princess Victoria and NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg looked on as two soldiers raised the blue banner emblazoned with a yellow cross among the official circle of national flags at the alliance's headquarters in Brussels. "The Russian, brutal, full-scale invasion against Ukraine united Sweden behind the conclusion that a full-fledged NATO membership is the only reasonable choice," Kristersson said. Swedish government ministers and party leaders from across the political spectrum attended in a show of national unity.



The NATO flag, left, is raised next to the Swedish flag during a ceremony at the Musko navy base Stockholm, Monday, March 11, 2024.

Sweden set aside decades of post-World War II neutrality when it formally joined NATO on March 7. The neighboring nation of Finland had already joined in April 2023 in another historic move ending years of military nonalignment. Finland's defense ministry

welcomed "our brothers and sisters in arms," saying on X, formerly Twitter, that "now we stand at the beginning of a new era. Together and with other allies in peace, in crisis and beyond." Russian President Vladimir Putin's decision to order troops into Ukraine on

Feb. 24, 2022, triggered an about-face in public opinion in both countries and within three months they had applied to join the world's biggest security organization. Putin claimed to have launched the war, at least in part, over NATO's east-

ward expansion toward Russia. But the war had an adverse effect, pushing more countries to join the alliance. NATO leaders have promised that Ukraine itself will join one day, although almost certainly not while the conflict rages on. "When President Putin launched his full-scale invasion two years ago, he wanted less NATO, and more control over his neighbors. He wanted to destroy Ukraine as a sovereign state, but he failed," Stoltenberg said.

"NATO is now bigger and stronger. Ukraine is closer to NATO than ever before, and as the brave Ukrainians continue to fight for their freedom, we stand by their side," he said.

Sweden's membership completes a strategic ring of NATO territory around the Baltic Sea. The country now benefits from the alliance's collective security guarantee Article 5 of its treaty a vow that an attack on one of them will be met by a response from them all. □

Associated Press

India announces steps to implement a citizenship law that excludes Muslims

By **SHEIKH SAALIQ**
Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government on Monday announced rules to implement a 2019 citizenship law that excludes Muslims, weeks before the Hindu nationalist leader seeks a third term in office.

The Citizenship Amendment Act provides a fast track to naturalization for Hindus, Parsis, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains and Christians who fled to Hindu-majority India from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan before Dec. 31, 2014. The law excludes Muslims, who are a majority in all three nations.

The law was approved by Indian Parliament in 2019, but Modi's government had held off with its imple-

mentation after deadly protests broke out in capital New Delhi and elsewhere. Scores were killed during days of clashes.

The nationwide protests in 2019 drew people of all faiths who said the law un-

dermines India's foundation as a secular nation. Muslims were particularly worried that the government could use the law, combined with a proposed national register of citizens, to marginalize them.

The National Register of Citizens is part of Modi government's effort to identify and weed out people it claims came to India illegally. The register has only been implemented in the northeastern state of Assam, and the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party has promised to roll out a similar citizenship verification program nationwide.

Modi's government has defended the 2019 citizenship law as a humanitarian gesture. It argues that the law is meant only to extend citizenship to religious minorities fleeing persecution and would not be used against Indian citizens.

"These rules will now enable minorities persecuted on religious grounds in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan to acquire

citizenship in our nation," Home Minister Amit Shah wrote on X, formerly Twitter. India's main opposition Congress party questioned the announcement, saying "the timing right before the elections is evidently designed to polarise the elections."

Human rights watchdog Amnesty India in a statement called the law "discriminatory" and said it "goes against the constitutional values of equality and international human rights law." It said the law "legitimises discrimination based on religion" and is "exclusionary in its structure and intent."

India is home to 200 million Muslims who make up a large minority group in the country of more than 1.4 billion people. □



Indians raise their tied hands and shout slogans during a protest against the Citizenship Amendment Act in New Delhi, India, Dec. 27, 2019.

Associated Press

Aruba Tourism Authority honors a loyal visitor at Divi Dutch Village!

The Aruba Tourism Authority recently had the great pleasure of recognizing an Emerald Ambassador of Aruba. This Ambassador was respectively honored with a certificate acknowledging her years of visits, loyalty, and love for the island of Aruba.

The honor certification is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation and to say "Masha Danki" to guests who have visited Aruba 10, 20, or 35 years or more consecutively.

The three honoring levels are as follows:

- Distinguished Visitor (10>years consecutively visiting Aruba)
- Goodwill Ambassador (20>years consecutively visiting Aruba)
- Emerald Ambassador (35>years consecutively visiting Aruba)

The honoree was: Emerald Ambassador Ms. Christl Schirpke from New York, United States.

Mr. Jorgino Willems representing the Aruba Tourism Authority, and staff members of Divi Dutch village bestowed the honor certification to the honoree, presented her with gifts, and thanked her for choosing Aruba as her favorite vacation destination, as her home away from home.

Top reasons for returning to Aruba, provided by the honoree were:

- Aruba's great weather.
- Aruba's wonderful food options.
- Aruba is a beautiful island.
- Aruba's friendly people.
- "Its our home away from home"



On behalf of the Aruba Tourism Authority, we would like to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to the honoree for his continued visits to the "One Happy Island".

Visit the island's hidden natural pools

(Oranjestad)—Amongst the countless beaches surrounding the island that are well-known and frequently visited, there are an additional two "hidden" natural pools that are situated in the northern coast of the island, two ideal stops in your tour itinerary.

Conchi (Natural Pool)

For many years, Conchi was the only natural pool that we had on the island. Located in the Arikok National Park, near Boca Keto and the Daimari Ranch, Conchi—also known "Cura di Turtuga (Turtle's Cove) or just Natural Pool—is reachable with any 4x4 vehicle or by foot if you're up for a long hike. However, since it is part of the National Park, you must first get per-

mission from park management to enter. You would have to purchase a day pass, and receive a wristband as proof of payment. Once you've completed that, you are set!

If you decide to hike from the entrance of the Arikok National Park, this is also possible: do bring plenty of protective clothing and enough water and food—it could take you up to three hours to hike there!

However, when you eventually do get there, you will be greeted with crystal blue water surrounded by a natural rock formation that protects you from the wild waves on the other side. Though the pool is located on the northern side of



the island (where the sea is largely rough and largely no suitable for swimming), the pool itself is very calm. It's also relatively deep, and you can climb up the rocks and jump in!

Cave Pool

This relatively new pool appeared just a few years ago, when a part of the dried up coral floor broke off and created a partition between the ocean and what is now the natural pool that is hidden there. Because it's still so new, there is no official name for it, but most people just call it the cave pool.

Just like the Conchi, the new natural pool is situated on the northern coast of Aruba. However, this pool is much easier to reach with any type of vehicle, and there is no hiking needed. This spot has also be-

come a regular stop for touring visitors.

When you get there, maybe you won't be able to spot the pool immediately, because you will probably notice the moon-shaped lagoon where wild northern waves crash into each other. Sounds scary, but if you look down on your right, you'll see a calm, crystal blue little pool in the corner. To get there, you have to climb down some stairs. Be careful when climbing down and follow the instructions of your tour guide if you have one.

And just like Conchi, this pool also has a jumping spot, and a rope to climb back up the boulder.

Picture of cave pool is credited to RockaBeach Tours



Paseo Herencia; An exciting destination for leisure and entertainment



NOORD — Paseo Herencia, situated in the heart of Palm Beach and within walking distance from the high-rise hotels, beckons with a diverse array of shopping, dining, and entertainment options in an outdoor setting.

Shopping

Paseo Herencia presents a captivating selection of stores catering to various preferences, encompassing beachwear, apparel, fragrances, footwear, jewelry, keepsakes, and much more. Unwind at Maggy's, indulging in their salon services while exploring a range of beauty products. For a memorable gift crafted from natural ingredients, explore Aruba Aloe's offerings. Iconic brands like Tommy Hilfiger, Calvin Klein, Aldo, Carmen Steffens, Nike, and Pandora stand among the favorites.

Dining

Embark on a global culinary journey at Paseo Herencia's diverse array of restaurants, each offering a unique dining experience. From the vibrant flavors of Iguana Cantina's Mexican cuisine to the Spanish elegance of Xixon Spanish Restaurant, the innovative fusion of Pizza and Sushi at Fusion Cuisine, the grilled delights of Skewers Grill, the comfort of The Lazy Turtle, the creativity at Drunk's Denial, and the seafood sensation of Sexy Shrimps Bar, and the familiar warmth of Starbucks, indulge in an unforgettable gastronomic adventure that spans the world's finest cuisines, all within the charming ambiance of our outdoor center.

VIP Cinema

Indulge in an unparalleled cinematic experience at Caribbean Cinemas VIP, nestled on Paseo Herencia's second floor. Relax in supremely comfortable reclining seats while enjoying movies on high-quality screens with state-of-the-art projection and 7.1 Dolby surround sound. Don't forget to relish the delectable buttery popcorn.

Entertainment

Paseo Herencia offers live entertainment from Monday to Friday at 8pm on the center stage, as well as captivating nightly watershows at 7:30pm, 8:30pm, and 9:30pm. Thrill-seekers can explore the Airsoft experience, located behind The Lazy Turtle. For picture-perfect moments, capture Instagram-worthy shots at the Angel Wings installation between Pandora and Free Spirit, or amidst the Flying mosaic hearts behind King Churros. There's more fun in store with delightful kids' activities, including a Kid's carousel and train ride, available every day from 6 pm to 10 pm.

Parking is complimentary for up to two hours when shopping, dining, or enjoying a movie at Paseo Herencia. Simply present your purchase receipt to the parking cashier. For more details on specials and events, visit the Paseo Herencia website at www.paseoherencia.com.



Weekly Free Slot or Table Play for all qualified Club members.

2X Double Points Tuesday!

Earn **DOUBLE POINTS** all day long!

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The Aruban flag: Our pride, our identity



(Oranjestad)—You may have noticed these past few days a few Aruban flags waving in the wind while cruising around the island. This is in connection to our National Hymn and Flag Day, which takes place next week Monday, March 18th.

Our flag is especially dear to us, as it represents both our Aruban identity as well

as the fight for our autonomy within the Dutch Kingdom. Here is a quick overview of the symbols embedded in our flag.

Along with the Aruban national anthem, the Aruban flag was adopted on March 18th 1976. To find the perfect design for our flag, the island council organized competition on the island where hundreds

of designs were submitted. The Flag Commission, which consisted of Epi Wever, Julio Maduro and Roland Donk were left in charge of picking the perfect design. Their goal was to find a flag that is quite simple, yet unique and representative to the Aruban identity.

The Aruban flag consists of four different colors, each with its own significance. The blue color represents the clear blue sea surrounding us, and our con-

nection to the ocean. The two yellow stripes represent our distinct status within the Dutch Kingdom—back then a first within the west colonies. The yellow color of the stripes represents our economic prosperity derived from tourism as well as industries such as gold mining and production of Aloe Vera. The bright yellow color is also representative of our local flora, such as the Kibrahacha, Pal'i Brazil and Wanglo among others.

The 4-point star symbolizes

the origins of the Aruban community; a melting pot of different cultures and identities from other parts of the Caribbean, Europe and the Americas. The red color is symbolic of our red soil, and pays homage to our indigenous ancestors, whom were the first inhabitants on the island. The white outline of the star symbolizes our white sandy beaches, as well as peace and the commitment to strive for justice, order and liberty. □

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Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again. For today we received a lovely message from our awesome visitors Susan & Bill Werner Seabrook, NH, USA.

They wrote to us saying: "Aruba to us is our second home! We first visited this beautiful island paradise on our honeymoon in 1982, and now we are so fortunate to own a condo on Eagle Beach."

Thank you for sending us this wonderful message sharing what Aruba means to you with us and our readers! ☐

Alto Vista chapel and its link to Aruba's origins

According to Etnia Nativa, in the 18th century most of the inhabitants of Aruba were indigenous who lived on the north coast, one of the largest communities lived in Alto Vista.

As they were very religious, they had a chief with the name of Antonio Silvester who guided them in the Christian life and it was he who decided to build a stone chapel with a roof of corn rods, which would serve as a place of prayer. In 1750 it was blessed by Father Algamesi who came from Coro-Venezuela and appointed Domingo Antonio Silvester as the island's first prosecutor in the name

of the Spanish crown and Rome. In 1752 the prosecution passed into the hands of Antonio Silvester's son-in-law, Miguel Álvarez, who continued to guide the parishioners in their prayers.

According to the book, The History of Alto Vista by R.H. Nooyen, it is not known when Domingo Antonio Silvester came to Aruba from Venezuela. The elders believe Antonio was a Spaniard. In 1780, father Joseph Antonio de la Vegal called Bernardino Silvester, one of Antonio's sons with his wife Anna Cathalina Tromp, "neighbors and naturals of the island Aruba" and thus they became natives.



At the end of the eighteenth century many inhabitants the island died as a result of the black fever epidemic and since people believed that the Alto Vista area was the most infected, they began to build their homes further south within the Noord area, so the town of Noord began to grow into a community till getting its own Church. However religious festivals continued to be celebrated at this sacred native place, with the custom of arriving in procession to Alto Vista.

Two-hundred years after the beautiful time of Alto Vista, people can no longer see much of the town of Alto Vista from 1750. With a lot of work they found the old foundations of the

Church of the Queen of the Holiest Rosary to build a new chapel on the same place. The entire surrounding area was empty and desolated, making it hard to imagine that Alto Vista was a town at all. A hundred years later, people can see the remains of around twenty houses, some made of stone and others of clay. Nowadays, only around six of these houses remain.

South of the chapel in the yard two graves can be observed, there was the cemetery which father Pablo de Algemesi blessed. It is not certain, but it is believed that the two graves belong to Antonio Silvester and Miguel Alvares, according to Nooyen. About 50 meters near the chapel

there are still the markings of an old house, where Antonio and Bernardino Silvester would have lived. About 200 meters from the chapel there is a water tank which the locals call Tanki Cacique. In the past this tank was closed. But mostly water was brought out from the Poz di Noord, a well dug in the sand.

The chapel can be viewed from basically any point in the north side, even from Paradera and Sero Plat. All the historical remains around the chapel provide us with an idea on how the old people of Alto Vista used to live. Don't miss the opportunity to visit a place of historical significance with a window to Aruba's past. ☐

Unique fauna of Aruba

For a small island, Aruba sure has a lot of unique treasures. Among these, we have some subspecies of animals that are unique to our island. These have evolved to perfectly adapt to our desert climate and make Aruba their home. At the same time, they are part of what makes Aruba truly one of a kind.

Cascabel (rattlesnake, *Crotalus durissus unicolor*)

According to the Arikok National Park, Aruba knows two kinds of snakes, the Santanero and the Cascabel. The cascabel belongs to the rattlesnake family. The cascabel is the only venomous snake from Aruba. It has a length of 65cm to 100cm, and is about 4 to 5cm wide. Its color varies from light brown to grey-brown, and its underbelly is white. On its back there are marks that are a little darker, in the shape of diamonds.

Its reproduction is oviparous, meaning the offspring can hatch from their eggs just before, during or immediately after laying.

The cascabel lives mainly in the Arikok National Park. It likes to live in dark places, and is thus found hidden among the limestone rocks and under stones. As a defense mechanism, the cascabel uses its rattle as a warning, and it is not an aggressive animal.

The cascabel feeds on lizards, small mammals such as rats and mice. It paralyzes or kills its prey with its venom, which is injected through a bite. The enemies of the cascabel are donkeys, goats, humans and cars. Humans are the biggest enemy of the cascabel, as they kill them and destroy their habitat for urbanization.

Shoco (burrowing owl, *Athene cucularia arubensis*)

The shoco is a small bird which is seldom seen. They are active during the day but are more active later in the day and at night for hunting.

These owls have very good night vision and very good hearing. The shoco is the national symbol of Aruba.

The shoco has about 20cm of length, and the females are slightly heavier than the males. They are light brown in color, with many white spots. The belly of the Shoco is either white or light brown, and the shoco has striking yellow eyes. Its beak is yellow/green. Young owls do not have white spots and are lighter in color. The nest of the shoco is a burrow in the ground. If the shoco cannot find a burrow, it will dig one in soft soil. The shoco lays one or two eggs every other day until all the eggs are laid – a shoco can lay up to four eggs. The first owlets hatch after three to four weeks. The shoco owl takes care of the owlets for three months until they leave the nest. Only a few owlets survive.

The owls dig burrows in the ground with low grass vegetation. An owl can live up to nine years.

Its defense mechanism is simply to fly away or retreat to its burrows. They eat mostly insects, mice and lizards, and the main threats to their survival are boas – an invasive species introduced by humans as pets – and humans through destruction of their habitat.

Prikichi

(parakeet, *Aratinga pertinax*)

The Prikichi is the national bird of Aruba. On Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao, parakeets can be found, but each of the three islands has a different breed. The Yellow-shouldered Amazon parakeet that we have on Aruba is also found along the coast of Venezuela. Unfortunately, there is interbreeding between the breeds due to cage birds from, for example, Curaçao being released on Aruba. The parakeet population on Aruba is in danger due to extensive deforestation occurring on the island because of the growing population.



The prikichi weighs between 90 to 100 grams. It has a greenish-brown head with some yellow around the eye. The back and wings of the parakeet are dark green, and the underside of the body is a lighter shade of green. There is also a bit of blue in the wings. The parakeet's beak is gray/black.

Parakeets often use termite nests as breeding sites. Parakeets are found in all natural environments (mondi) of the island. It defends itself by flying away and loud cries. Parakeets eat seeds from the pods of the Kwihi tree, Divi Divi, and columnar cactus. They also consume natural fruits. Its main predators are boa constrictors, humans.

Conew (cottontail rabbit, *Sylvilagus floridanus nigronuchalis*)

The Eastern Cottontail rabbit (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) was probably brought over to the island by Indian settlers thousands of years ago as a source of food. This rabbit, locally known as Conew, has spread all over the island and has become part of our ecosystem. The very adaptable Conew can live in a wide variety of habitats, including Aruba's xeric scrublands, where it typically grazes on weeds and grasses.

The Aruban Conew has a brownish grey color and a distinctive white belly. This white fur extends to the bottom of the tail which becomes visible as the rabbit runs. These rabbits can grow up to approximately 40 centimeters in length over their

short lifespan of 3 years. Cottontail rabbits reach reproductive maturity when they are just 2 to 3 months old. A female rabbit, called a doe, finds a suitable nest spot under a shrub or rocks and lines it with fur. She can have an average of 3 to 4 litters per year averaging 5 young each. The doe only visits her young once or twice a day to nurse her babies for a period of 2 to 3 weeks. The young reach independence at 4 to 5 weeks.

The Aruban Conew is an endangered species and protected by Aruban law. The Conew is thought to have drastically declined due to an increase in human activities, habitat fragmentation and predation by the invasive Boa constrictor as well as feral cats and dogs. However, recently there seem to be more rabbit sightings in rural and wilderness areas and also in the National Park. This could be linked to a recent decline of the invasive Boa population after the long period of drought. As the Conew can reproduce very quickly, a short break in predation pressure can lead to a fast increase of rabbits. Sadly, the Boas are back on the rise again with the truly wet rainy seasons we have recently experienced. This could cause a new decline in the Conew population that was just starting to recover.

These are but a few of Aruba's beautiful inhabitant, which we must all contribute to protect. For more information, visit <https://www.arubanationalpark.org/main/flora-fauna/>



CROSSWORD

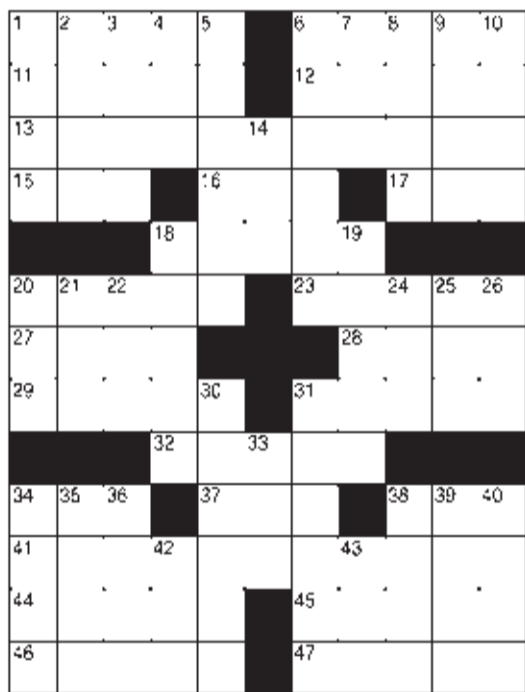
By THOMAS JOSEPH



- ACROSS**
- 2 Thor's father
 - 1 Figure out
 - 6 Wanders
 - 11 Perfect
 - 12 Terrible
 - 13 Disk in a setting
 - 15 Finish
 - 16 Recipe unit
 - 17 Spectrum color
 - 18 Like cliffs
 - 20 Singer Joplin
 - 23 Rear ends
 - 27 Whole range
 - 28 Ring out
 - 29 Doled (out)
 - 31 Song
 - 32 Flower part
 - 34 Little rascal
 - 37 Trip around the track
 - 38 Sty resident
 - 41 Formulaic writing
 - 44 Detail map
 - 45 Jacket flap
 - 46 Use the rink
 - 47 Midterms and finals
- DOWN**
- 3 Give for a while
 - 4 Mover's truck
 - 5 Votes in
 - 6 Drake, for one
 - 7 Symbol of wisdom
 - 8 Miles off
 - 9 Remote button
 - 10 Winter coaster
 - 14 Regret
 - 18 S, M, L, and XL
 - 19 Eye part
 - 20 Traffic snarl
 - 21 Brunched
 - 22 Undoing word
 - 24 Got together
 - 25 Butter square
 - 26 Crafty
 - 30 Take out
 - 31 Mark with spots
 - 33 Golf goal
 - 34 Sacred bird of Egypt
 - 35 Brother, of a sort
 - 36 Leaning tower setting
 - 38 One of a bear trio
 - 39 Article
 - 40 Some tooth-pastes
 - 42 Rent out
 - 43 Indulgent

Yesterday's answer

- 24 Got together
- 25 Butter square
- 26 Crafty
- 30 Take out
- 31 Mark with spots
- 33 Golf goal
- 34 Sacred bird of Egypt
- 35 Brother, of a sort
- 36 Leaning tower setting
- 38 One of a bear trio
- 39 Article
- 40 Some tooth-pastes
- 42 Rent out
- 43 Indulgent



3-12

AXYDI.BAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three I's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

3-12

CRYPTOQUOTE

KDEM VMQNZML MILD MC OYMF
GNH KMICF XN IQQM WX IF
IWNKNTG GNH FMRMC TNX.

— CNVMCX VCIHKX

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: YOU ARE REBORN WITH THE ROSES, IN EVERY SPRING. — JUAN RAMON JIMENEZ

Cruise ship Schedule: Mar 09- Mar 17 2024

SAT	09	STAR PRIDE	06.00	18.00	1
TUE	12	SILVER DAWN	08.00	23.00	1
		SYMPHONY OF THE SEAS	08.00	21.00	1
		RHAPSODY OF THE SEAS	08.00	****	1
WED	13	ROTTERDAM	08.00	17.00	1
		GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS	16.00	****	1
		RHAPSODY OF THE SEAS - Dept.	****	18.00	
THU	14	NORWEGIAN SKY	08.00	20.00	1
		MSC DIVINA	07.00	14.00	1
		GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS - Dept	****	18.00	
FRI	15	SEVEN SEAS SPLENDOR	07.00	18.00	1
		WIND SPIRIT	10.00	23.00	1
SAT	16	AIDAPERLA	08.00	18.00	1
SUN	17	CELEBRITY BEYOND	08.00	23.00	1
		CELEBRITY SUMMIT	10.00	23.30	1

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basic but important information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.

through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.

vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 9 or 10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.

Drinking water

The water that flows

Supermarket hours

Supermarket hours may

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Worried about money? Ways to keep your kids from feeling your stress

By **KIMBERLY PALMER**
of **NerdWallet**

When it comes to parents and children, money stress can be contagious.

That's what Amy Weimer, director of the School of Family and Consumer Sciences at Texas State University, found when she and a colleague studied 60 children last year. They were more likely to report feeling worried if their parents were experiencing long-term financial stress.

"As a parent, if I know I'm in deep debt, I would want to do something to address that issue so it doesn't trickle down and have an impact on my child's mental well-being," Weimer says. Parents may want to seek financial counseling to help with debt management, for example, if they are experiencing financial strain, she adds.

According to researchers and financial professionals, there are also other steps parents can take to help teach their children about money without sharing their financial worries with them. **TALK ABOUT MONEY EARLY** Talking about money with children during neutral moments can help establish a comfort level with financial discussions, says Justin Rush, a certified financial



This Jan. 22, 2022 file photo shows the likeness of Benjamin Franklin on \$100 bills in Dallas. Associated Press

planner and founder of JGR Financial Solutions in Canton, Ohio. On a recent drive with his son, a seventh grader, and father, the trio started talking about the price of a McDonald's Big Mac, which led to a conversation about inflation. Those kinds of chats can lead to discussions about budgeting and other financial lessons, Rush says, which sets a baseline for speaking about money with ease. "Some parents think they are doing kids a service by not talking

about adulting stuff early on," says Kimberly Watkins, assistant professor in financial planning at the University of Georgia, who adds that you can start talking about money with children as young as age three. But the reality is, she says, avoiding the topic can create a "generational cycle" of financial unawareness, which can ultimately lead to more money stress.

LEARN TOGETHER Sometimes, Watkins says, learning about finances can be a family project that

benefits both parents and children. "Be comfortable with letting kids know you don't know everything," she says. If your child asks you a question about money you can't answer, then you can find out together. Watkins suggests using the "Money as You Grow" website from the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau for ideas on topics to explore together, such as the financial ramifications of buying a pet or moving to a new house. Your bank or credit union might offer ad-

ditional online resources to help your family, she adds.

CONSIDER LANGUAGE CHOICES CAREFULLY

Because children often interpret words so literally, using phrases like, "we don't have the money for that" in response to requests can be confusing, says Pam Horack, a CFP at Pathfinder Planning in Lake Wylie, South Carolina. Instead, she suggests saying something like, "That's not in our budget right now."

That small language shift helps a child understand that parents are constantly making choices and trade-offs when it comes to money, she adds, which can ultimately be an empowering realization. Megan McCoy, an assistant professor in the personal financial planning department at Kansas State, suggests also being mindful of how you might talk to sons and daughters differently about money, even if it's by accident. "One old study talked about how daughters were more likely to get messages around saving, and sons more likely to get messages around earning," she says. "That could contribute to risk tolerance or picking a job with the right earning potential. It could make a big impact." □

Reddit looking to raise almost \$750 million in initial public offering

By **MICHELLE CHAPMAN**
AP Business Writer

Social media company Reddit is looking to raise almost \$750 million in an initial public offering of its common stock.

The company said in a regulatory filing that the IPO will include 22 million shares of Class A common stock. Reddit is offering approximately 15.3 million shares, while the selling stockholders are offering about 6.7 million shares.

Reddit anticipates that the IPO will be priced between \$31 and \$34 per share. At the midpoint of that range Reddit would raise about \$451 million, and it plans to use proceeds for general

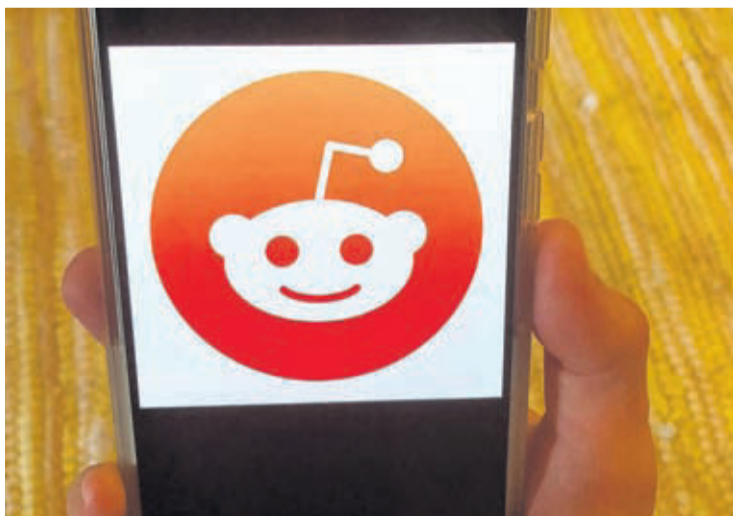
corporate purposes, taxes and possibly acquisitions. The San Francisco-based company said that the un-

derwriters have reserved, at its request, up to 1.76 million shares for sale at the IPO price through a direct-

ed share program to eligible users and members of its platform, certain board members and friends and family of certain employees and directors.

The underwriters were also given the right to buy up to an additional 3.3 million shares to cover any over-allotments. Reddit, which began in 2005, had more than 76 million people, on average, visit the platform every day in December, according to a letter from co-founder Steve Huffman that was included in the filing. It has more than 100 million unique subreddits. Reddit announced plans for its IPO last month. In documents filed with the

Securities and Exchange Commission, Reddit said it reported net income of \$18.5 million its first profit in two years in the October-December quarter on revenue of \$249.8 million, primarily through advertising. The company also said at the time that it struck a deal with Google, valued at approximately \$60 million, that allows the search giant to use posts from the online discussion site for training its artificial intelligence models and to improve services such as Google Search. The agreement will also give Reddit access to Google AI models for improving its internal site search and other features. □



This June 29, 2020 file photo shows the Reddit logo on a mobile device in New York.

Associated Press

Team Penske steps up for Captain when Roger Penske's leadership of IndyCar is questioned

By JENNA FRYER

AP Auto Racing Writer

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP)

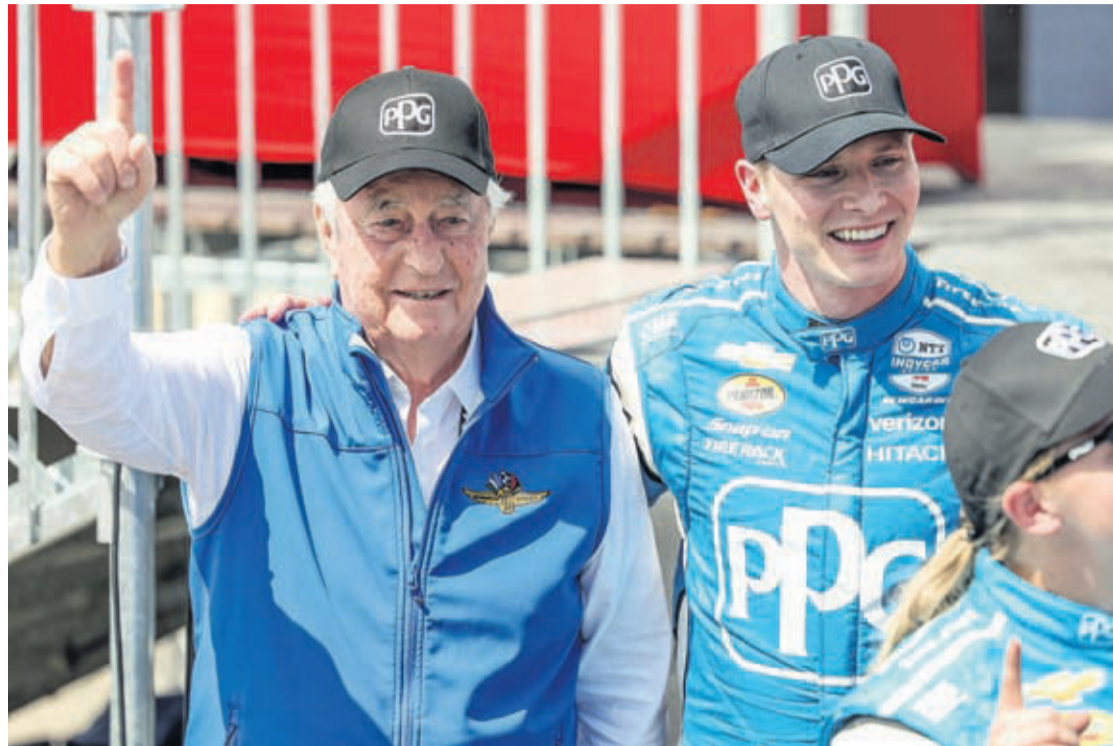
— There's no better message to send to critics than an absolute domination, which was the exact Team Penske response after rival team owners took aim at Roger Penske's series leadership.

Penske silently fumed at the criticism which included a bold call from Michael Andretti for the 87-year-old Penske to sell IndyCar if he won't up his investments into series marketing and promotion but refused to engage in a public battle with disgruntled stakeholders.

Instead, a renewed Josef Newgarden led all three Penske drivers to top-four finishes in Sunday's race. Newgarden earned the 30th win of his IndyCar career, while Scott McLaughlin finished third and Will Power was fourth. "What did you think about our team today," Penske texted The Associated Press after the race while using the emoji of the smiling face with stars in its eyes.

It was the pick-me-up Penske needed after a tumultuous weekend following a six-month offseason filled mostly with disappointing news. Among the speedbumps IndyCar encountered since its September season finale was the delay of its long developed hybrid engine until after the Indianapolis 500; criticism from Honda that sounded as if the engine manufacturer is willing to leave the series when its contract expires, and the forced move of the season finale from the streets of Nashville to the speedway located 35 miles away from the iconic downtown.

But team owners have a variety of complaints, including a push for a charter system similar to the one in NASCAR that creates a franchise model that guarantees a return on their investment for



Team Penske driver Josef Newgarden, of the United States, right, celebrates his victory with team owner Roger Penske after the IndyCar Grand Prix of St. Petersburg auto race, Sunday, March 10, 2024, in St. Petersburg, Fla.

participation in the series. There's frustration over the current car, which on Sunday opened its 12th consecutive season virtually unchanged, and an overall dissatisfaction that IndyCar races aren't promoted at the same level as Formula 1 or NASCAR. Drivers even began to take shots at the packaged project when a handful complained that post-race podium celebrations outside of the Indy 500 are amateur and not indicative of the accomplishment achieved in succeeding in the highly competitive American open-wheel series.

IndyCar and the Indianapolis Motor Speedway are both owned by Roger Penske, who took control of both just two months before the COVID-19 shutdown. He kept both the series and speedway in business, hosted the Indianapolis 500 without spectators at a massive financial loss, and continued to pay teams their scheduled bonus money out of his own pocket.

Those were all points rival team owner Chip Ganassi made in his defense of Penske's leadership, and Penske himself dismissed

the comparisons of "F1 does it this way" or "but NASCAR does it that way" because IndyCar has a fraction of media rights deals the other series hold, and nothing close to the revenue stream of the other two series.

Plus, IndyCar isn't trying to be F1 or NASCAR. It's trying to be IndyCar, and the single unanimous subject in the paddock is that America's open-wheel series is the most competitive in the world. Yes, Newgarden dominated in his pole-winning Sunday win, but IndyCar a year ago had seven different winners and is the most diverse series in that it races on ovals, permanent road courses and temporary street circuits.

Newgarden didn't understand the negativity, particularly after what appeared to be the largest crowd on the 20th anniversary of the first Grand Prix of St. Pete one of the most popular races on the IndyCar 17-race calendar.

"I know it's subjective, and I'm trying to be sort of fair about this. The crowd was amazing. I've seen more people here than I've ever seen at an Indy-

Car race," Newgarden said after his win. "I saw more specific, current IndyCar team jerseys. I saw more kids. It looked really good to me. I've seen a ton of negative noise, and I get it. Everyone wants to jump on anything, but everything I experienced this weekend was pretty incredible."

Of course, the Newgarden we are about to witness this season has undergone some sort of transformation and has taken a positive and perhaps isolated view to a season. A two-time IndyCar champion and the reigning Indianapolis 500 winner seemingly lost his love of racing during last year's four-race winning season and has used deep reflection to recapture his passion.

"I'm definitely a perfectionist. I'm an introvert, but I get hyper fixated on just trying to maximize everything," he acknowledged. "It did start becoming a job ... but if you're fortunate enough to be here and do this, you should enjoy it. I'd always had it. I'd learned how to thrive in the pressure and still enjoy the job, and I think it just slipped away at one

point.

"I was buried with a lot of other things, and I just tried to simplify my life and get back to happiness, and I think I've done that in a lot of ways. I feel really happy. I feel motivated." Newgarden now speaks as if he expects a Max Verstappen-like season, where he wins every weekend and runs away with the championship. His offseason changes included closing the media company he co-owned, unfollowing every single person on social media, and the ending of the "Bus Bros," which was a popular social media show starring Newgarden and McLaughlin.

Not only has the programming ended, but the one-time inseparable Penske besties seems to be professional with one another but at an arm's length in their personal relationship. When asked about Newgarden's intense new approach following Sunday's race, the former Bus Bro was remarkably fast to end the conversation.

"Doesn't affect me," McLaughlin said without blinking an eye.

The AP asked Penske if there's been a falling out between Newgarden and McLaughlin, and it was news to him. But in a lighthearted moment, he vowed to find out: "Gives me something to do," he laughed.

Sounded a whole lot better than the pounding he'd taken all weekend, saved only by the pounding Team Penske gave right back in Sunday's race. □

Associated Press



Russell Wilson has agreed to sign a 1-year deal with the Steelers, AP source says

By **ROB MAADDI**
AP Pro Football Writer

Russell Wilson is heading to the Pittsburgh Steelers.

The nine-time Pro Bowl quarterback has agreed to sign a one-year deal with the Steelers, a person familiar with the details told The Associated Press on Sunday night.

The person, speaking on condition of anonymity because the contract hasn't been finalized, said Wilson will receive the veteran's minimum of \$1.21 million while the Denver Broncos pay the remainder of his \$39 million salary.

Wilson posted his intentions on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter, saying: "Year 13. Grateful. (at) Steelers."

The 35-year-old Wilson was 11-19 in two seasons with the Broncos after being acquired in a trade from Seattle. He bounced back from a dreadful 2022 season and threw 3,070 yards, 26 touchdowns and only eight interceptions, but still lost his job to Jarrett Stidham after going 7-8 in coach Sean Payton's first season last year.

Wilson led Seattle to eight playoff appearances and a Super Bowl title in 10 seasons with the Seahawks.



Denver Broncos quarterback Russell Wilson sits on the bench during the second half of an NFL football game against the Los Angeles Chargers, Sunday, Dec. 31, 2023, in Denver.

Associated Press

The Steelers lost a wild-card playoff game with Mason Rudolph as their starting quarterback. Rudolph went 3-0 after replacing Kenny Pickett, who was 7-5 before going down with an injury. Mitch Trubisky started the other two games and went 0-2.

Pittsburgh is scheduled to play the Broncos in Denver

this upcoming season and the game could feature a return by Wilson.

The NFL is expected to release its league schedule in May.

Last week, the Broncos informed Wilson they'd release him when the new league year begins Wednesday but gave him permission to speak to oth-

er teams.

"We thank Russell for his contributions and dedications to our team and community while wishing him the best as he continues his career," the team posted on its social media channels last week, adding, "We are excited to improve this offseason and will have the flexibility to get better

through the draft and free agency."

After signing a nearly quarter-billion dollar extension before playing a down in Denver, Wilson contended the Broncos had threatened to bench him for the final nine games last season if he didn't push back his \$37 million injury guarantee in his contract. Wilson declined to adjust his deal and started seven more games before getting benched in what Payton insisted was a football move, not a financial one.

The move also comes less than two weeks after Steelers general manager Omar Khan said the team had "full faith" in Pickett, a former star next door at the University of Pittsburgh who has struggled to be a difference maker at the most important position on the field.

Pittsburgh head coach Mike Tomlin has defended Pickett at every turn since the Steelers selected him with the 20th overall pick in the 2022 draft. Tomlin admitted in the days after Pittsburgh's loss to Buffalo in the playoffs that 2024 would be a "huge" year for Pickett and the plan was to bring in competition during training camp. □

New York Yankees ace Gerrit Cole to get MRI on right elbow

CLEARWATER, Fla. (AP) — New York Yankees ace Gerrit Cole will have an MRI of his right elbow after experiencing issues in bouncing back following spring training starts.

The 2023 AL Cy Young Award winner has been durable in career, making at least 30 starts in each of the last six full regular seasons.

"He described it as his recovery, leading into his next start, has been more akin to what he feels in the season when he's making 100 pitches," Yankees manager Aaron Boone said Monday. "He usually doesn't have the recovery issues he's having. It's been more of a challenge, more

taxing. So we're going to get an MRI to see what we're dealing with here."

The 33-year-old has been throwing fewer pitches in his spring training starts this year than other rotation members.

"I think there's a level of discomfort, but I wouldn't describe it as he's in pain," Boone said. "His stuff and his command has been really good in his outings. He's just having a hard time recovering like he's used to." Cole is entering the fifth season of a \$324 million, nine-year contract that pays \$36 million annually. He has the right to opt out after the season and become a free agent, but if he opts out the Yankees

can void the opt out by adding a guaranteed \$36 million salary for 2029.

Yankees center fielder Aaron Judge is not expected to play again until Wednesday due to spring training fatigue.

"A little mid-spring kind of beat up just with all the work they do in the cage and backfield and stuff," Boone said.

Judge has not taken on-field batting practice the last couple days and was replaced after three innings and two at-bats, in which he struck out both times, in Sunday's game against Atlanta.

"We want to make sure especially with your veteran guys, they're not overdoing

at this time of year, but at the same time, obviously you've got to ramp them up," Boone said. "He actu-

ally does a really good job of governing and protecting himself." □



New York Yankees starting pitcher Gerrit Cole walks to the field before a spring training baseball game against the Toronto Blue Jays Friday, March 1, 2024, in Tampa, Fla.

Associated Press